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SUBJECT: COST AND RESOURCE ESTIMATE FOR US OUTPOST IN ABECHE

REF: A. DS/IP/RD EMAIL TASKING FROM KEVIN BARRY

[1](#)B. N'DJAMENA 199

[1](#)C. N'DJAMENA 191

Summary:

[1](#)1. (U) RSO N,djamena was tasked on July 3 to produce a survey to address the creation of a diplomatic outpost in Abeche, Chad. US Embassy Chad has recognized since early 2007 the desirability of a permanent base of operations (or at the very least, a facility) to house the numerous TDY,rs in the area and provide a secure environment from which to cover the region. Historically, USG visitors have relied completely on a few American NGO,s and the UN for everything from transportation, to food and lodging. End Summary

History

[1](#)2. (U) Abeche is the largest city in eastern Chad. A regional capital, it is home base to almost all NGO,s and the UN,s High Commission for Refugees (UNHCR) efforts to relieve the growing humanitarian crisis in eastern Chad. REFTEL B provides a solid overview of the city and its history and should be required reading for anyone considering a permanent presence in the city. This cable will focus not on the city and its surrounding environs but rather what level of effort, both financial and human, is needed to establish a permanent base of operations. The RSO in N,djamena continues to approve, as the security situation allows, limited term TDYs to the area for Embassy reporting officers and other USG visitors monitoring the UN and NGO operations and providing periodic assessments of humanitarian conditions among refugees and displaced persons as well as liaison with local populations.

[1](#)3. (SBU) On February 18, 2007 the US Embassy EAC discussed the desirability of establishing a remote residence in Abeche, REFTEL C. The purpose of this residence would be to provide a safe environment for Embassy personnel who are visiting or on Temporary Duty (TDY) to the region. Currently, USG personnel rely almost exclusively on UN agencies and partner NGO,s to provide temporary lodging for official TDY,s to the area. At the time, the facility was only envisioned as a residence capable of housing a handful of visitors and not as a permanent base for extended operations. This cable explores the implications for a fully fledged operating base as well. This facility would no longer be under the 12 FAM 330 Residential Security Program, but be subject to 12 FAM 310 Physical Security of Facilities Abroad and the requirements for Critical Crime and Political Violence. For both categories of facility, unless other wise indicated, cost estimates provided would apply to both.

Cost Estimates and Resources

¶4. (U) Abeche is a remote, arid city, geographically isolated and landlocked with poor airlift capability or facilities. As a result, even basic essentials are next to impossible to find in Abeche on a regular basis. Everything from shampoo to toner cartridges would have to be imported from N'djamena. The UNHCR compound offers temporary lodging and dining facilities on a pay for use basis but can quickly be overwhelmed by visitors. The French Army base has medical facilities but only for emergencies. Local food vendors are unreliable and unsafe as sanitation standards are low in Abeche. Fuel is always in short supply and priced higher than in N'djamena.

¶5. (U) Complicating this situation are the inadequate, poor roads and airport facilities in Abeche. Its short 10,000 foot runway is barely adequate to allow for a C-130 sized cargo plane take off and landing. A recent Air Force flight team supporting a CODEL visit to Abeche recommended the airport not be used for C37 (G5) jet aircraft. Most supplies and materials will have to be brought in overland on a long and bandit-infested road which limits the driving to daylight hours. This results in a 2-3 day drive from N'djamena, depending on the season and speed of the convoy. A convoy security plan must be established as even UN and NGO convoys are attacked from time to time. Daytime driving is usually safe but convoys loaded with fuel, food and other supplies are always going to be a target; especially since the Government of Chad is not able to project its security forces beyond the areas just outside of the major cities and towns.

¶6. (U) There is a serious lack of suitable property in Abeche. Most if not all of what is available will require extensive renovations to bring them up to acceptable standards. Leasing property will be between \$1500 and \$5000 monthly. Prices are rising because of UN and NGO presence and the possibility of a UN Peacekeeping Operation (PKO). \$1500 will get a basic shell of a home that contractors can upgrade while \$5000 a month would be something in a nearly ready-to-move-into-state. Already, TDY officers in the area have reported a marked increase in prices and a decreasing availability of suitable properties. The area around the French base and airport is considered the best in terms of security and convenience. A recent trip to Abeche by the RSO disclosed massive walling off projects around that area in an effort by local landlords to consolidate property before the anticipated land grab begins. A DAO observer commented that many government officials and merchants are planning much higher prices as UN and Humanitarian missions increase in size. Even with the high end rents, generators, 10' fencing with lights, a water cistern, pumps, etc., will all be needed as these are often not standard features for a home in Abeche.

- Add-ons: Generator, electrical system rebuild, water system rebuild, water cistern, security upgrades, yard upgrades (paved parking, guard shack, etc.) kitchen upgrades estimate: \$100,000.

- Salaries: Will depend on the going rate in Abeche but most likely will have to be on par with US Embassy Locally Employed Staff (LES). Our wages will have to meet or exceed those of any UN PKO or we run the risk of providing a trained labor pool for locals who, ll be waiting for a better opportunity if a large PKO materializes. We'll need local drivers, translators (Arabic and French), security (see below) and a cooking/cleaning (CHAR) force. A local FSNI will be needed for liaison with the local police. In total operating costs for this local staff would be approximately \$50,000 to 75,000 to per year. A residence only facility would only need basic services and cost \$25-35,000 per year.

- Guards: The US Embassy in N'Djamena has trained its own LES Local Guard Force due to inadequate training and hiring standards for local contractors. Locally contracted guards have been known to commit crimes of opportunity due to poor supervision. Recently one local guard contracted by a NGO attacked and tried to rape the ex-pat worker he was assigned

to protect. Our LGF in the city would have to be hired locally and include at least two supervisors and a coordinator. One facility or compound with 24 hour operation would require at least 2 guards per shift. Recently bandits have scaled the walls of two different NGO compounds and robbed the ex-pat residence. The lone guard at each compound was easily overpowered. At one incident a local gardener was shot and killed. A staff of 9 would be approximately \$90,000 for salaries, uniforms and equipment. Using a contractor for LGF would not necessarily be cheaper due to the hyper-inflation of prices.

- Vehicles: At least two, three is better SUV 4x4's) two &safari8 kitted Toyota Land Cruisers and one Troop Carrier (Hardtop) Land Cruiser, with a minimum 10 ton winch, river fording adaptors (snorkels), roof racks, grille guards and heavy duty air filters. The economy in Abeche is very limited in its ability to support and maintain any other type of vehicle - \$150,000) 200,000 to purchase. Mud and sand tires to accommodate season changes plus air filters, oils etc would add another \$25,000 annually.

- Communications: VSAT \$5000 start up, plus monthly payment - \$50,000 annually. Landline phones are unreliable unless tied into a satellite system. Mobile phone, both cellular and satellite are necessary) \$15,000 per year. A VHF SSB radio link to monitor the UN/NGO system and provide emergency and operational two-way communication would be helpful - \$75,000 start-up for installation of base and vehicle units, receiving and transmitting tower. A dedicated back-up generator and frequency permits/license and repair and replacement costs would add another \$25,000 per year.

- Administration: Since banking services are practically nonexistent, staff will need to be hired/fired, supplies and services contracted to the extent available, vehicles and the facilities will need maintenance; all manner of administrative, HR, GSO and Financial services will be needed to support an extended operation in Abeche. Most of these functions can be combined into one or two positions but due to the lack of education and skilled workers in the area, qualified candidates will have to be brought in from N,djamen. An American could fill the position but a dedicated interpreter who has knowledge of local prices customs and regulations is needed or we run the risk of local price gouging - \$20,000 per year estimated. These services would not be needed for a residential facility.

- Medical: A full time nurse practitioner would be needed as there is no safe service that can be contracted. It may be possible to negotiate an agreement with the French for emergency services but routine medical needs would need a dedicated individual trained to recognize tropical diseases, stabilize injured employees and a contracted medical evacuation service to remove severe cases from the area for treatment - \$250,000 for salary, supplies and MEDEVAC contracting. For a residence, the UN and French medical capabilities can provide limited emergency services and a nurse practitioner would not be needed. A contract MEDEVAC service should be retained and would cost \$150,000 per year.

- Transportation: The only commercial flights available to Abeche are on Toumai Air Chad. Flights are infrequent, expensive and service is unreliable due to cancellations on short notice. UN flights provide the USG with the only reliable flight service. However, seating is limited and flights are often canceled for maintenance or other reasons. Contracting a local flight service is an option. Several vendors exist and would most likely be able to fly the route several times a week. The cost of this service varies but is roughly \$1,200 per hour. A round trip flight for an 8-10 seat aircraft with a max payload of 5500 pounds would be about \$6,000. Flying twice a week for a year would be approximately \$624,000. We should consider this service for both types of facilities and only use the UN system for a back up.

- Airport: As mentioned above, the Abeche facility is very

limited. Ramp space is shared with the French and Chadian Air forces. For any serious increase in flight operations, at a minimum the ramp space would have to be increased and the runway improved. In all likelihood, the Government of Chad (GoC) would be unable to assist in a meaningful way. Corruption within its civil service would likely drive the cost if left to local contracting. This would have to be an assistance project probably in excess of one million USD and monitored by an ex-pat contractor. This would be unnecessary with a residential facility.

¶16. (U) The security situation is tenuous at best. DS should factor in the need to have a permanent security representative in Abeche to liaise with local law enforcement, UN and NGO security personnel. Safe convoy routes change almost daily and with the continuing rebel insurgency in the east, battles with the Chadian Army can occur rapidly and unexpectedly. Rural bandits, &Toro Boro8 Sudanese rebel militias and roaming Janjawiet militia all mix in the east. Monitoring their locations and action from N,djamena has proven to be a full-time challenge for the ARSO. Having a dedicated security officer at this location would also serve to advise the many US based NGO,s in the area regarding personnel safety as well as provide a more real time security assessments for the USG operations in the area. Currently, only the UN has dedicated security officers while the NGO,s often give the responsibility to their supply and logistics coordinators as an extra duty) one for which they often do not have time or simply are not qualified to complete. As a result, a steady stream of security incidents occur in the east with good-intentioned but ill prepared NGO workers. In the past year, NGO workers have been shot, sexually assaulted, robbed and beaten due to a lack of security oversight. Any serious staffing of a permanent facility should include a designated security officer who is language proficient in Arabic or French. For a residential facility, this would be unnecessary. However, DS should consider making the ARSO position in N,djamena Arabic language designated.

The Bill

¶17. (U) The cost of starting up and maintaining a permanent presence in Abeche will be significant. DS can expect to fund major security upgrades to any facility leased or purchased to be inline with critical crime and critical violence standards found in 12 FAM 310 for a permanent office. In addition, adding another ARSO position to N,djamena is highly advised to have a duty rotation set up in Abeche. All equipment and re-supply will have to be brought in overland or via air cargo. After speaking with contracting, procurement, UN administrative workers and NGO officials, the total bill for starting an operation like this will exceed 3 million USD with reoccurring costs in excess of 1.5 million USD. If classified operations are required the start-up cost would go up exponentially. These estimates do not include shipping and transportation of personnel and supplies to Chad or American salaries. They represent the best guess of all parties involved.

¶18. (U) A residential facility would undoubtedly be easier to set up and maintain as it would not be a focal point for meetings or other USG activities. It would provide lodging and not require a co-location waiver or be subject to the physical security standards for official USG offices. Depending on the communication capabilities the cost of such a facility would be much less) \$500,000 to 1 million for leasing, upgrading and equipping. Reoccurring costs less than \$200,000.

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